

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
December 18, 2019

Present:

Board

Joseph H. Secrist, President	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Richard B. Bulman	(R)
Wadella Thomas	(R)
Susan MacKinnon	(D)

Staff

Jeri Cook, Election Director

Board Attorney

Philip Cronan

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on December 18, 2019 in Conference Room # One at the Board office indicated above. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. Mr. Secrist noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meeting of November 20, 2019, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Mr. Bulman noted the page numbers were incorrect. Mr. Black moved approval of the minutes as presented with the correction of the page numbering. Ms. Mackinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Changes to the Agenda/Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Black moved approval of the agenda as presented. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook reported on the following:

- She and several Board Members met with the County Council to update the Council Members and staff. The County officials acknowledged the need to include in the capital budget the space needs of the Election Board. The County Manager is aware of the phone problems and his staff is working to address them.
- The staff attended an Eastern Shore Best Practices meeting.
- Monae Butler made presentations to approximately 25 Easton High School students regarding serving as Election Judges. They were very receptive.
- Ms. Cook attended a Defending Digital Democracy Project training where she received information on how to prepare an election operation station. She will also be attending an IGo conference in Charleston, SC in January to receive management information and education opportunities.
- Tammy Stafford has been hired as a part time staff member beginning January 8, 2020.

The calendar of upcoming activities through the primary election was passed out to the Board Members.

Mr. Black asked what will be done regarding the quality of the phone system, specifically regarding voicemail. Ms. Cook reported that the county expects the system problems will be addressed this week. If there is no progress on addressing the problems, she will need to explore possible phone systems outside that provided by the county.

Mr. Black also asked if the county has made any further progress in addressing the security problems included in the study done for the facilities used by the Election Board. Ms. Cook said a few items were addressed, but others are still outstanding. Mr. Black asked that a letter be drafted to the County Manager with copies to the County Council Members expressing concern about the lack of attention to these issues. The consensus of the Board is that Ms. Cook work with Mr. Secrist to draft such a letter for Mr. Secrist's signature.

Ms. Cook provided the Board Members with copies of a news article regarding an incident in the Sheriff's area adjacent to where the voting equipment is maintained. Someone entered the area without permission seeking to retrieve his car stored there. It further raises the issue of the safety of our employees working in that space and the security for the equipment. Ms. Cook was asked to include this concern in the letter to the County Manager.

Discussion then led to the plans for relocating the Election Board in anticipation of the demolition of the area where the voting equipment is maintained. The discussion also included the need to have the voting equipment maintenance area and the office at a single location. It now appears that the demolition of the building is scheduled for 2023. In looking at the calendar of elections for the period through that date, we need to make the county aware that during certain periods it will be extremely difficult to relocate. Candidates and the public need confidence that they know where the office is to obtain information and to file for candidacy. Furthermore, the complexity of handling a move during an election adds extremely difficult demands on staff to both handle the elections and a major relocation. Mr. Bulman suggested that Ms. Cook prepare a calendar showing dates where relocation will seriously interfere with the election process. Mr. Bulman asked that the agenda for the next Board meeting include a discussion of why our relocation needs to be in 2021.

Board Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronin stated he has nothing new to report.

Old Business

a. Facilities for Election Office

This item was addressed during the Election Director's Report.

b. Budget FY2020

Expenditure reports through November were provided to the Board Members. Ms. Cook noted that the state has not provided billing to the county for payroll expenses since September 10, resulting in under reporting of expenses through October. No other issues were discussed regarding the current year expenses.

c. Review Invoices

Ms. Cook provided copies of invoices received since the last meeting and responded to questions from Board Members.

d. County Bulletins

Ms. Cook previously distributed copies of recent County Bulletins and responded to questions from Board Members.

New Business

a. Budget FY2021

Ms. Cook provided the Board Members with a draft budget for the coming fiscal year. She noted that it includes a 1% salary increase which will take effect January 1, 2020 and reclassification of the job duties for staff. The reclassifications will result in pay increases of approximately 6% and a 2% cost of living increase. Due to the reclassification, some positions will no longer be eligible for overtime pay. Mr. Secrist asked for consideration of a decrease of the proposed overtime expense from that suggested by Ms. Cook. Ms. Cook was agreeable to the requested reduction. Mr. Secrist asked about the number of Election Judges and the related cost. No Board action was taken on the draft budget. Ms. Cook agreed to present a revised draft budget reflecting the reduced overtime expense to the Board at the January meeting.

b. Election Judges

Ms. Cook provided preliminary list of Election Judges and their assignment. She will be refining the list to consider the proximity of the assignments to their homes. Ms. Cook noted that she has sufficient candidates to not only fill all the planned positions but also several substitute judges to cover possible withdrawals and no shows.

At this point, Mr. Cronin departed the meeting.

Closed Session

Mr. Black moved that the Board go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters as permitted under General Provisions Art. 3-305(b) (1). Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Whereupon the Board went into closed session at 11:44 AM. Ms. Cook departed the meeting at this point.

At 1:31 PM, the Board returned to open session. President Secrist reported that the Board performed the End-Cycle review of the Election Director's performance evaluation.

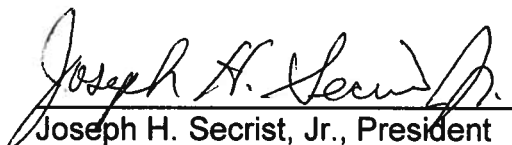
Confirmation of the next meeting.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elections will be Wednesday, January 15, 2020 9:30 AM.

Adjournment

Mr. Black moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:33 PM.

Attested,


Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President

Respectfully submitted,


Richard B. Bulman, Secretary